SOME SOCIAL-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF CERTAIN INDUSTRIAL ASPECTS OF COMMUNITY LIFE FOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO DECATUR, ILLINOIS

BY

DWIGHT YORK

B.S., University of Illinois, 1928

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AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, 1941

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I. Problem

This study is limited to a description and analysis of some social-economic problems and trends in Decatur, Illinois, and the indication of implications growing out of these problems and trends for the educational and financial administration of the Decatur Public Schools.

More specifically, the purpose of this study is (1) to trace briefly the historical development of Decatur, Illinois, with reference to: the growth of the population, its distribution by age groupings, its distribution by occupational classifications, and its spatial distribution within the community; the industrial and financial growth; and the growth of the public school system, (2) to indicate recent industrial, financial, and population trends in the community, (3) to investigate those phases of the youth problem in Decatur relative to the number in school and out of school, their employment status, the school-grade level last attended by those out of school, the number of high school graduates who continue their formal education by enrolling in higher educational institutions, the distribution of high school graduates as to the curricula from which they were graduated, (4) to describe briefly the present program of education of the public schools of Decatur as to curricula, program of subjects, services rendered, supervisory and administrative organization, and (5) to point out implications and problems for educational and financial administration growing out of the preceding analyses.

II. Methods

In this study historical and simple statistical methods of research were used in compiling and presenting the data. In interpreting the data and deriving implications and suggestions for action the writer has been guided by accepted points of view in the field of educational and financial administration. There is a

growing recognition of the need for comprehensive studies of this type involving a combination of all helpful research methods in the attempt to relate definite data concerning social and economic trends to definite areas of educational and financial administration.

The procedures followed in collecting the data relative to the several parts of the problem involved an examination of all available materials pertaining to the history of the community, the United States Census Reports and Community Planning Reports for information relative to population and occupational trends, the Annual Reports of the Board of Education, the Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of Education, and all tabulations of information on file in the office of the superintendent of schools pertaining to the development of the program of education in the Decatur Public Schools. An analysis was made of the records of all youths who were graduated from the Decatur High School during the five-year period, 1934-1939. Further, the annual audits of the Board of Education, the official records in the offices of the country treasurer and county clerk were examined for information as to tax rates, assessed valuations of taxable property, amounts of taxes collected, and per capita costs.

Questionnaires were used to collect data relative to the number of high school graduates entering institutions of higher learning, and to get information from a large group of youths in Decatur between the ages of 16 and 21 inclusive. The items on the questionnaire form called for information as to age, school attendance status, employment status, marital status, occupational classification of those employed, last school-grade level attended by those out of school, and the occupational classifica- of parent.

III. Conclusions

1. In view of the high tax rate for schools, the relatively high ratio of school tax rate to the total tax rate, the rate of tax collections, the stabilizing influence of the diversity of industrial and agricultural resources, the steady improvement of business and industrial conditions, and the competent budgeting and financial planning by the administration of the schools, the financial support of the program of public education in Decatur, Illinois,

seems reasonably secure. However, when compared with other large industrial cities in Illinois, Decatur, having less ability in taxable resources, must continue to exert a relatively greater effort to provide a program of education in line with the needs of the community.

2. Since the data indicate that the total school population has shown a trend toward assuming a stable distribution among the three organizational levels, that is, among the elementary, junior high, and senior high schools in Decatur, the future school building program can be planned with some degree of certainty as to meeting future needs and in harmony with the anticipated future distribution of the population in the community. Further, increasing proportions of the income for schools can be allocated to the improvement of the quality of the educational program at all grade levels.

3. The present administrative and supervisory organization in the Decatur school system should be studied seriously with a view to relieving the superintendent of the great burden of detail which he has found it necessary to assume during the past decade. In a school system of this size it becomes imperative that the superintendent be provided with a staff of assistants to whom many responsibilities may be delegated if he is to have the time and energy to guide the development of a broad program of education in line with the needs of the community and its ability to support such a program. With this in mind the administration should consider the advantages which could be gained from a codification of major professional responsibilities and relationships.

4. Although the proportion of the total population in Decatur under twenty years of age has been decreasing during the past three decades, the increasing democratization of secondary education as evidenced by a continuous increase in the proportion of this age-group attending school will require continued adaptations to the needs of young people, most of whom will not attend college and many of whom have little interest in the traditional academic courses. The responsibility of the secondary schools to provide educational experiences and services to meet the needs and problems of youth in Decatur constitutes a major

challenge to the administration, the secondary school personnel, and the community.

5. The increasing demands and added responsibilities placed upon the schools in the community will continue to challenge the administration of the public school system to stimulate the continued professional growth of principals and teachers to the end that the program of education and instruction may be improved continuously to meet the needs of life today. This continued professional growth and the resulting improvement of the educational program is important in continuing to merit the confidence of the community in the worthwhileness and efficiency of its public school system.

6. The administration should be guided by long-term financial and educational planning based upon a continuous study of social, economic, and industrial trends in the community and nation. The rapidity of change and the complexity of the resulting problems and needs make this an important problem.

7. The possibilities and responsibilities of a close cooperation with other social institutions and agencies in the community will continue to increase in number. This necessitates continuous study and information relative to the relationships of the schools to these agencies and institutions. This means a continuous appraisal of the functions of the public schools will be imperative.

8. Since the problem of financing locally an adequate program of education in Decatur has always been and will continue to be a difficult one, serious study and effective action relative to the possibilities of federal and state aid for schools and state legislation concerning local school finances will continue to be of vital concern to the administration of the schools in Decatur.

9. It becomes increasingly important that the community be informed continuously relative to the problems and needs of its schools. A vigorous and persistent program of interpreting the needs and achievements of the schools to the community should become one of the major responsibilities of the administration. The financial security of the schools can be strengthened further by an understanding by the community of the effectiveness of the educational program in meeting the needs of life today.

VITA

Dwight York was born in McLeansboro, Illinois on January 30, 1905. He attended the public schools in McLeansboro, Illinois and was graduated from the McLeansboro High School in 1921. He was enrolled in the Southern Illinois Normal University, Carbondale, Illinois from 1921-23, and in the University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois from 1926-28, receiving the B.S. degree in October. He attended the University of Illinois Summer Sessions in 1928, 1930, 1931, 1933, and 1934, receiving the M.S. degree in October.

From 1923-1926 he was a teacher in the McLeansboro High School, McLeansboro, Illinois. During the years 1928-30 he was a teacher in the Marion Township High School, Marion, Illinois. He served as Principal of the McLeansboro Township High School, McLeansboro, Illinois from 1930-34. From 1934-36 he served as Principal of the High School and Superintendent of Schools in Shelbyville, Illinois. For the past five years, 1936-41, he has served as Assistant to the Superintendent, Decatur Public Schools, Decatur, Illinois.

He is a member of Phi Delta Kappa, Kappa Delta Pi, and Kappa Phi Kappa.

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